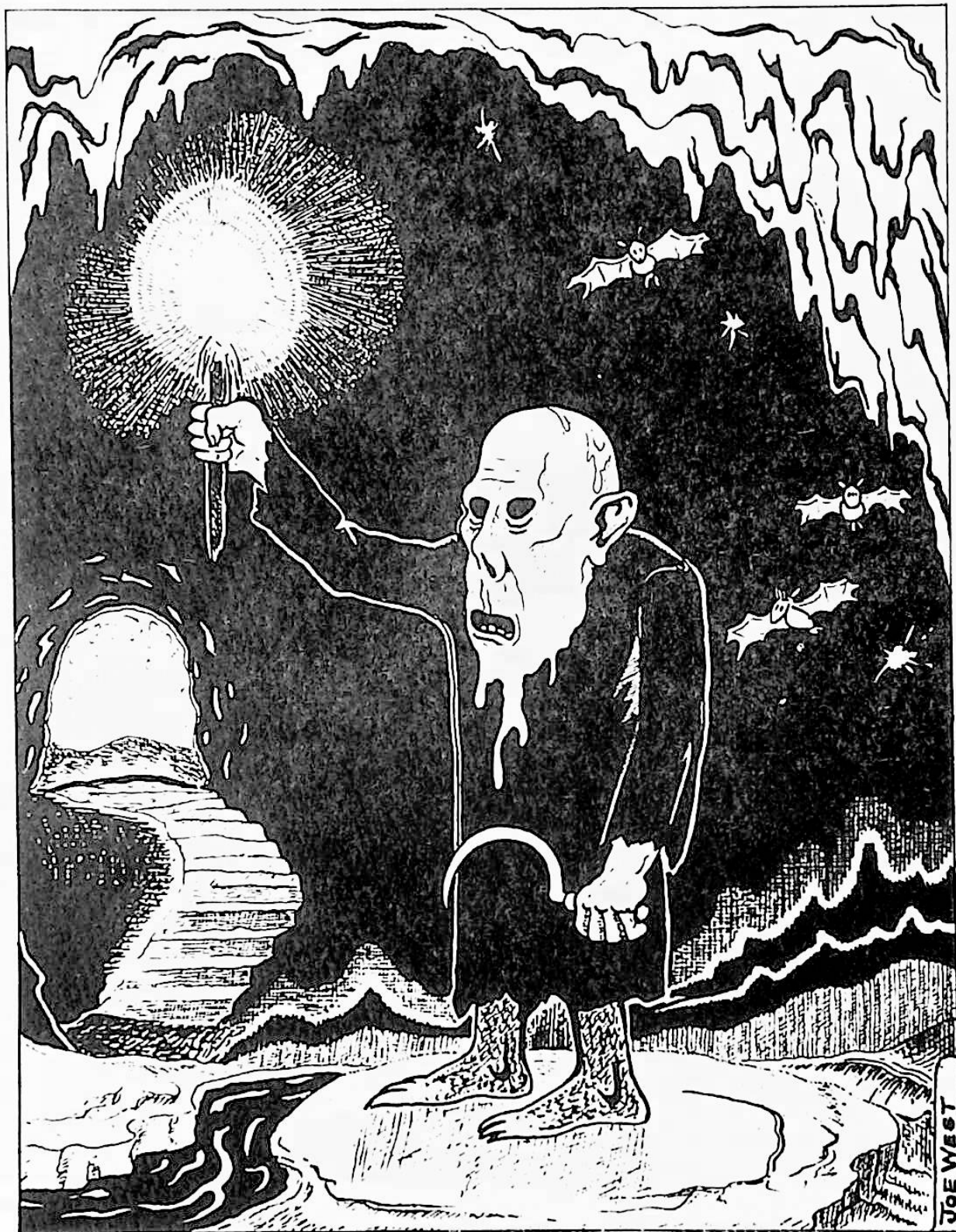


Fantasy and Terror

new series : no. 3



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Editorial: A Prose Fancy

I FANCY MYSELF romantic as I sit in a lovely café, one which calls itself, in French, the Reason to Exist. But I shatter the fragile dream of old-world beauty by calling this place not *Raison de être*, but The Raisin Eater. This at least deflates any tendency to pomposity (mine or that of the café). I admit I'm too gleefully aware of my decadence and laziness; but what better thing could be sought or achieved? Should I strive for sake of honor? Duty? Intellectual pursuit? I'd rather eat cake, I would, I'd rather "waste" my life in stately poverty and keep my fool's grin. Then, come Lady Death, at least I'll have fewer shattered illusions; fewer than those who, at last breath, finally saw that god and country

and company store were damned things to live for. Romance was the thing. Romance! And it is missed time and again. Social mores and regulations make automatons of most. Without the automatons, the termite tower would tumble; and fat lot of good that would do me. Yet the same necessity that makes the masses buttress the fort leads also to war for god and country and company store. So forgive my low ways. At least I can somewhat sensibly cling to *one* illusion: that I built no weapon and bloodied no crown. Maybe I will be disillusioned with the rest and wish, in the end, that I had at least destroyed something. I hope not. The end will tell.

— Jessica Amanda Salmonson
Seattle, 1984

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"Truth tyrannizes;
doubt liberates."
Remy de Gourmont, 1904

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In the Wondrous City of Ramaazan

IT PLEASED the gods (for is it not written in the Books of Imnau that men were made for the amusement of the gods?) that I should go out across the plains of Nizal toward the wondrous City of Ramaazan. Many days I followed the way in the sand, but I wondered much at the absence of travelers and merchants. Ramaazan does not shut her gates to strangers, nor does she frown on the interlacing caravans, and I had expected to encounter many. I hastened forward, urged on by curiosity and anxiety. Know also that a lonely road is not profitable to one of my tribe. So, when I awoke to see the dawn of the eighth day and noted the walls of Ramaazan in the distance, even the mouth of my purse cried out with joy.

High on the hills of Malk stands Ramaazan, where the first rays of the sun strike the bronze gates and the marble towers, and the gates themselves that are the color of fire seen through a cloud of smoke, while high above them all glows the chrysoprase tower of the Temple of Tus. In the cool of the morning I ran toward the city, and when the sun had travelled but a fourth of his course I had reached the one of the four roads that leads straight to the gate. I had seen all about the steep sides of Malk lay endless camps and innumerable caravans, and I wondered at so great a multitude. A mighty stream of people was going into Ramaazan.

I learned that this was the day on which the Priest of Tus was chosen, when every man in

the land of Zalmar must come to the city. It was not long before the hunger of my purse was appeased; then I joined the people and went up into the glorious streets of Ramaazan.

Beautiful indeed are its marble buildings, its alabaster fountains. The sacred tree of Tus stands before each dwelling place. Naught else in the city is the same dull green of the temple, for this is the color belonging to the god. Where the four principal streets meet in the center of the city, there is a huge open space ringed around by marble columns and having at the entrance of each a statue of a hero of Ramaazan. This serves as a public square, and in it is the Temple of Tus, which stands on the west side and faces the rising sun.

I turned aside from the gathered people and was able to stop a merchant and procure a handful of nuts to complete my breakfast. I slipped them into my girdle and hurried onward with the gathering people.

On the steps of the temple stood a man veiled in sacred green and perched on his shoulder was a little white monkey. The man beside me seemed garrulous enough, and made it known that the priest of Tus went always veiled. For the whole year of his term he lived alone behind the carved green screens of the temple. The monkey, he told me, was a marmoset and at this time of year a pure white one was brought from a distant land. Long ago, when Ramaazan was still young, and when Nizamul

the Mighty and Sledus the Just, and the others of the heroes of Ramaazan, still walked the streets and stood on the steps of the temple, there lived one Jalali, a sculptor. It was he who had carved the statues of the heroes, and it was he who had presented to Tus the exquisite figure of a marmoset wrought in chrysoprase. So welcome was the gift in the eyes of Tus that it was placed in his temple, and thereafter became the mouthpiece of the divine decree. Through the carved green lips of the little green monkey the great god Tus murmured and whispered his will.

Now, after a time, the words of the mighty one became so indistinct and mumbled that a priest was needed to interpret those sayings which fell from the marmoset lips. In choosing this priest the people took no part. The god would make known his will and designate the favored mortal who should serve him and interpret his words.

Soon I became aware that a hush had fallen on the crowd and that, gently as leaves slipping to the ground, the entire audience had fallen to their knees. One whispered to me, "Kneel, put thy face next to the ground, nor look, nor stir." I obeyed, though in bending low, my nuts fell out of my girdle and rolled along the ground. I moved not to replace them. Presently I heard the rush of tiny feet beside me, and then came the sound of sharp teeth grating against the hard shell of a nut. Restraint was difficult, for my nuts had not been purchased with a handful of sand, and it seemed I must surely look up. Then I felt a light touch on my back and, turning, I saw the old

green-veiled priest motioning me to rise. I followed him through the knots of bowed worshipers until we came to the Temple of Tus. With a low, "Stay," he left me to return to the people. "Tus has chosen!" I heard him proclaim, and then I knew why I had been brought to the temple. Then came the bustling offering of sacrifice, sacrifice of small and perfect white monkeys upon the altar of the great Tus.

In the days that followed I, who had been as bondless as the drifting sand, knew what it was to become more than a slave—a priest in the temple. And when the thralldom became more heavy than I could bear, I one day resolved to unclasp the green veil of my head and leave the shrine of Tus behind me forever. I would wait, however, until the passing of the days should bring the worshipers together before the temple and a new priest could be chosen.

As the year was drawing to its close, there came news of an army approaching from the South. Now Ramaazan had grown sleek and peaceful since the days of Nizamul, and the men no longer wished to fight. The marmoset was silent. One day a nomad came galloping in and told how he saw the sun on their helmets even as he guarded his flocks a day's ride from Malk. Though it was long after sunrise, the king hastened to the temple. At first the monkey was silent, but at length the king was told to go up to the beggar who sat on the top step of the temple as the water-clock showed noon, and speak to him, for he alone could save the city. Then I hastily donned my beggar's garb and, slipping

out, settled on the top step and drew my hood over my face. The slave struck the brazen disk, as a sign that the water-clock showed noon.

Next morning the gates of Rama-azan were opened wide and all the doors of the houses therein—in truth, everything save the doors of the temple. No person was in the streets, no face at a window, nothing stirred in Ramaazan. Well indeed did the people follow my instructions. As I saw the army advancing in the distance I burst forth from the southern gate and, fleeing down the steep road, ran

stumbling across the desert toward them. I raised my hands as though to push them back and, with horror on my face, cried to them to stop.

"Woe! Woe!" I cried. "Rama-azan is destroyed! The gods in anger decreed that all who set foot in the city should die, and there is no more life within the walls. Even now the doom is upon me." I clutched my throat and fell heavily on the sand. With the cry, "The gods! Nothing can avail against the gods!" the army fled.

—Marry Arrington, 1925

Pruning the Flowers

I AM THE temple of strange growth. I am only alive through my quick, impulsive use of a pair of kitchen scissors. Let me tell you about this.

I was first aware of a small yet inconsiderate pain in the pit of my stomach. Soon it plagued me daily, scant of all courtesy. I appealed to Jehovah and many lesser gods, and consumed various medicines, all of which were quite ineffectual. Finally I appealed to the pain itself.

It left me the following morning.

In its place, something else had begun, something more definite. I could feel a heavy, bulbous growth expanding day by day, mushrooming within me. It was painless and I was curious. I wanted to peer down my throat and take a look at it. But then I felt its twists and turns reaching my throat . . . and beyond, to somewhere.

I did not choke, though I am now quite short of breath. It did not strangle me. Instead, my left shoulder began to take on a peculiar pulpy quality, a soft,

swampy whiteness like the melting of wax.

The growth broke through last week in the form of six budded, sallow tendrils. While I slept, one of these flowered.

The flower was no delight. I awoke screaming. Its thin, raptorial teeth had clamped against my cheek and were sinking, sinking oh so deeply into my face. The fetid smell and the ghastly bite made me recoil. I grabbed the perniciously weaving stalk and held it at bay. I staggered into the hall, managed to reach the kitchen, made use of the scissors.

Now I prune the tendrils down to where they join my skin. This keeps death at bay for the present. I am afraid to sleep; the flowers grow so quickly. So I lie awake this night, feeling diseased and wretched; and in the morning, I will light another candle, keeping the curtains drawn. It is only by candlelight that I may bear my fate. Its dim, flickering glow hides from me the fact that my arms, back and chest are turning pulpy white.

—Archie N. Roy, Scotland

The Man With the Golden Brain

THERE WAS once a man who had a golden brain; yes, madam, a brain all of gold. When he came into the world, the physicians did not think that the child would live, his head was so heavy and his skull so huge. He did live, however, and grew in the sunlight like a fair olive-tree; only his large head always dragged him down, and it was pitiful to see him knocking against the furniture when he walked. He often fell. One day he rolled from the top of a flight of steps and struck his head against a marble stair, when his skull rang like an ingot. They thought him dead; but when they picked him up, they found only two or three drops of clotted gold in his blond hair. It was in this way that his parents learned that the child had a golden brain.

The matter was kept secret; the poor little fellow himself suspected nothing. Once in a while he would ask why they no longer allowed him to play in the street with the other boys.

"They would steal you, my beautiful treasure!" his mother would reply.

Then the child would be terribly afraid of being stolen; he would return to his solitary play without saying anything, and drag himself heavily about from room to room.

Only when he was eighteen years old did his parents reveal to him the monstrous gift which he had received from fate; and as they had thus far brought him up and supported him, they asked in return for a

little of his gold. The boy did not hesitate; on the spot—how and by what means the legend does not tell—he tore from his brain a lump of virgin gold, as large as a nut, which he threw proudly upon his mother's knees. Then, dazzled by the wealth which he bore in his brain, mad with passions, intoxicated by his power, he left his father's home and went through the world squandering his treasure.

From the manner in which he lived—royally, and sowing his money broadcast—one would have thought that his treasure was limitless. Nevertheless, his brain began to be exhausted, and proportionately his eyes could be seen to grow dim and his cheek hollow. One day, finally, on the morrow of a mad debauch, the poor wretch, left alone amidst the paling lights and the fragments of the feast, was appalled by the enormous breach which he had made his ingot; it was time to stop.

From then on he led a new life. The man with the golden brain went off to live alone by the labour of his hands, timid and suspicious as a miser, flying from temptation, striving to forget the fatal wealth which he would not touch. Unhappily, a friend had followed him into his solitude; and this friend knew his secret.

One night the poor man was suddenly awakened by a pain in his head, a frightful pain; he sat up, terrified, and by a beam of moonlight saw his friend hurrying away with some-

thing concealed beneath his cloak.

Another bit of his brain stolen from him!

A little later the man with the golden brain fell in love, and this time it was all over with him. He loved with his whole soul a little blond woman, who also loved him well enough, but who loved still better pompons, white feathers, and pretty reddish tassels tapping the tops of her boots.

In the hands of this dainty creature—half bird and half doll—the bits of gold melted away like snow. She had a fancy for everything, and he could never say her nay; he even, for fear of paining her, concealed from her to the end the sad secret of his fortune.

"So we are very rich?" she would say.

"Oh, yes, very rich!" the poor man would reply.

And he would smile lovingly at the little bluebird which was unconsciously devouring his brain. Yet sometimes he would become frightened, and would long to be miserly; but then the little woman would come dancing to him and say,

"My husband, you who are so rich, buy me something which costs a great deal."

And he would buy her something which cost a great deal.

This lasted for two years; then, one morning, the little woman died without their knowing why, like a bird. The treasure was nearing its end, but with what remained the widower gave his dear dead a splendid funeral. Bells pealing, heavy black-draped carriages, plumed horses, silver tears upon the velvet—nothing seemed to him

too fine. What did he care now for his gold? He gave of it to the church, to the bearers, to the sellers of immortelles; he gave everywhere, unquestioningly. And so, when he left the cemetery, almost nothing of this marvellous brain remained, hardly a few grains on the walls of his skull.

Then he was seen wandering through the streets with a dazed look, with hands outstretched, and staggering like a drunken man. At night, at the hour when the bazaars were lighted, he stopped before a large show-window in which a mass of stuffs and jewelry glittered in the light, and remained a long while looking at a pair of blue satin boots trimmed with swan's-down. "I know somebody who would like those boots," he said to himself with a smile; and, already forgetting that his little wife was dead, he went in to buy them.

From her back room the shopkeeper heard a great cry; she hastened in, and recoiled with terror on seeing a man leaning against the counter and looking stupidly at her with an expression of pain. He had the blue boots with swan's-down in one hand, and held out the other, all bloody, with scrapings of gold under the nails.

This, madam, is the legend of the man with the golden brain.

In spite of its likeness to a fantastic tale, this story is true from end to end. There are in this world poor folk who are condemned to live on their brains, and pay in pure gold, with their marrow and their substance, the smallest things in life. It is a daily pain to them; and then, when they are weary of suffering—

—Alphonse Daudet, tr. 1926

The Blue Boar of Totenhoe

WHEN NEW acquaintances discover that I restore wood-carvings and paint-work—mostly in old churches—for a living, they tend to ask me one of two questions. The first is, "Have you ever seen a ghost?" in which case I am quite capable of boring them for hours with my experiences; and the second is in the line of, "Will you have a look at our valuable family heirloom?" in which case they often bore me for hours (afterwards I've been known to consider sending them a bill for my professional services!). Usually the objects which I am shown on these occasions are of little interest and no great worth, but now and then I come across something out of the ordinary.

Just such a case was the strange painting which I examined in the attic of the Blue Boar Inn; a small Victorian building close to the medieval church of All Saints, Totenhoe, a few miles south of Colchester. I was lodging at the Inn while I restored a Jacobean pulpit in the church; since the rectory was being decorated at the time, it had not been possible for me to stay there.

Mrs. Miles, the landlord of the Blue Boar, was an attractive middle-aged widow; very business-like, but still willing to spend time chatting with a guest. One morning, soon after my arrival, we were talking about this and that as she served me with a delicious breakfast of creamy scrambled eggs and piping hot toast.

"I know you're busy," she

said hesitantly, "but if you've got a few minutes to spare before you go over to the church today, I have a painted panel which I'd very much like you to see. I think it could be an old inn sign, and I'd love to know whether it's antique or not. It's certainly much more than twenty years old—my husband and I found it, hidden away and already in a filthy state, when we first moved here in 1958. Unfortunately the surface is so very dirty that I can't make out what it's meant to depict. There's a large shape in the centre which looks as though it might be a blue boar, but except for running a duster over it I've never dared try cleaning it to find out—with my luck I would take all the paint off with the dirt!"

Inn signs can be fascinating curiosities. My interest in them is considerable, and not just because many of the artists—sometimes itinerants, sometimes locals—were also responsible for work of one sort or another in churches. Thus when I told Mrs. Miles that I would be glad to see the picture, my enthusiasm was unfeigned.

The attic which we entered shortly afterwards was filled to overflowing with the sorts of things which people refuse to throw away "because they might come in useful one day." We picked our way carefully between dusty cardboard boxes, a pram with no wheels, a moth-eaten teddy-bear, and what looked like the remains of a couple old motor mowers, before reaching the far end where a large, dark board was lying propped against the

wall. The harsh illumination from the unshaded light bulb revealed a good solid panel of oak, in a narrow frame; but no details of the painting could be seen, except for a vague shape in the centre.

"Yes, this is definitely an inn sign," I said. "The holes in the top of the frame were probably intended to take a hanging bracket."

After a brief examination, I added reluctantly, "But I'm afraid it isn't very old—no more than fifty years, I'd say. The funny thing is that it shows no signs of weathering. I don't think it was ever hung outside, or not for long anyway."

I could see that the inn-keeper was a little disappointed, but she cheered up when I suggested I might have a go at cleaning the painting in the evenings, after I'd finished work in the church. "The dirt is only superficial," I said. "I could have it almost as good as new in a few days—you might even want to hang it up somewhere downstairs."

SO IT WAS that, after supper that night, I settled down in front of the panel, surrounded by piles of rags and cotton wool, and equipped with a bottle of solvent. Cleaning of this sort is not difficult, but if attempted by a well-meaning amateur it can result in complete disaster and sometimes the loss of a valuable work of art. I was thus very pleased that Mrs. Miles had been sensible enough to leave well enough alone in this case.

The picture which began to be revealed over the following three evenings was undoubtedly the creation of a skilled crafts-

man. The subject was indeed a blue boar, but unlike the normal heraldic portrayal of this animal—seen for instance on the new sign outside Mrs. Miles' hostelry—the creature here was painted in a vigorously realistic way. It was set against a naturalistic background which I quickly realised was intended to be the main street of Totenhoe itself: on the right I could see the lych-gate at the churchyard entrance; and just beyond was the Inn. The boar was rampaging down the deserted road, and facing outwards, so that—as I removed the layers of grime and the figure beyond became clearer—I almost felt that it might leap out at me. By comparison with its background it was a good deal larger than life-size, and its mouth was filled with a set of dreadful looking teeth: grotesquely huge, pointed and stained with rusty red. "Not the sort of beastie I'd want to meet on a dark night!" I thought.

When I showed the results of my work so far to my host, she agreed with me that the artist must have had a vivid imagination. "I'd better not hang the sign up where people can see it," she said. "I don't want to give my customers nightmares!"

The next day I returned to the attic to clear away the final areas of dust from the painting, but when I pulled off the old sheet with which I had covered it, I recoiled involuntarily, quite horrified at what I saw. The boar had moved! It seemed to be much larger and closer to the front of the scene. Its limbs and lower body had disappeared com-

pletely below the level of the bottom edge of the frame, and its revolting head, with jaws open wide in a bellow of rage, was blotting out much of the street in the background. Even more disturbingly, I thought I detected a spark of human malice in its evil little eyes.

Needless to say I did not stop to do any work. Instead I called down to Mrs. Miles so that she too could see the peculiar transformation. At first sight of the panel she gave a dismayed gasp and exclaimed, "Good grief, what on earth happened to it? You haven't been repainting it, have you?" I pointed out that I could hardly have repainted the whole representation so brilliantly in the twenty-four hours since she had seen it last. "Then what *is* going on?" she said.

"I wish I knew," I replied. "But one thing I'm sure about is that the picture should have been left untouched. I'm definitely not going to finish cleaning it. To be honest, I would be scared that my hand might go into that ghastly mouth and be bitten off. If I were you I would consider chopping the board up for firewood."

It was with quite understandable eagerness that the inn-keeper acquiesced to my suggestion. We covered the panel up again in the old sheet and then, after closing time, we manoeuvred it downstairs, struggling with it out into the backyard. I think we both got great satisfaction out of breaking up, especially since, when we removed the sheet, the blue boar seemed to have progressed a little further up the street. The wood was brittle and dry, so

it burned easily enough, and no strange manifestations accompanied its destruction.

THE FOLLOWING evening I got back to the Inn slightly later than usual, having had tea with the rector in the one room of the rectory which was not filled with builders' ladders and the smell of wet plaster. I had been puzzling all day over the phenomenon I'd witnessed, and I was pleased to find that the revered gentleman was a very good listener. Unfortunately he had only been in the incumbency for fifteen years so he knew nothing of the circumstances surrounding the panel's creation, and was unable to explain the events which I described. Even so, I enjoyed our conversation, and returned to the Blue Boar in a cheerful mood.

As I walked into the crowded bar, intending to go straight up to my bedroom to change, Mrs. Miles paused from her duties behind the pumps to call me over.

"I've been talking to Chris Gotobed here," she said, indicating a slight, pipe-smoking figure sitting nearby. "And it looks as though he has some sort of solution to our mystery. You remember the sign-painter, don't you Chris?"

The old fellow must have been eighty at least, but he was as spry and sharp as a youngster. Although a little taciturn to start with, he became quite voluble when I offered to refill his almost-empty mug of cider. I shall not try to reproduce his broad East Anglian accent verbatim, but from what he said, I gathered that the artist

in question had been an itinerant who appeared in the village in the 1930s.

"He was nothing more than a tramp," Chris told me. "But according to Joe Stark, who was landlord in those days, he'd done some painting around Colchester and came highly recommended. So Joe had him do a sign, to replace the old one — which was a grand picture, but a bit worse for wear, though in the end it had to last another ten years.

"I reckon all the pay the tramp got went straight back into the till. He worked hard enough, but all the time that he wasn't working he was drinking. It must have rotted his brain over the years, for he used to see things that weren't there. Green mice or pink elephants — you know what I mean. They call it the DTs, don't they? He'd badger anyone who'd listen with tales about the devils who were after him. It wasn't long before people avoided the bar altogether when he was here. Joe Stark's business dropped off, I can tell you; and on the day the painting was finally finished, he was a very happy man.

"If I remember rightly it was later, on the self-same day, that I was with some of my pals when we saw the tramp running along the street like a madman, shouting, 'Keep it away! Keep it away!' and looking over his shoulder every so often with a terrified expression on his face. You'd have thought Old Nick was after him, but none of us saw anything at all. Right outside the church he keeled over and when we got to him, he was dead.

"Well, after that, as you can imagine, Joe decided not to hang

up the new sign, especially since it was a very nasty piece of work guaranteed to scare customers away. Must say I'm surprised to hear that you've found the horrible thing after all this time. I thought it had been put on the bonfire long ago."

"It has now," I said, and in unison Mrs. Miles and I added, "Good riddance to it."

CAN THE hallucinations created by delirium tremens be so potent that they develop a kind of life of their own? And can that life be transmitted into a two-dimensional copy of one such hallucination? Or conversely, can a man suffering from the DTs somehow imbue the subject of a painting with such vitality that it then pursues him to his grave?

After the incidents at Totenhoe, I am inclined to believe that one or other of the alternatives is a distinct possibility.

There is a small postscript to add to the story. As a result of certain delvings into parish records, I eventually discovered the identity of the tramp. Although this in itself is not relevant to my account, I did also find out that the day on which he died was September 15th, 1933. Since Mrs. Miles and I destroyed the inn sign on September 15th, nearly fifty years later, the date is obviously significant. I suspect that the strange transformation only took place on the anniversary of the artist's death; in which case it may be that we were the first people "lucky" enough to see it. I can't say I'm sorry that, by our actions, we have prevented anyone else from sharing our "luck."

—Marry Ann Allen, Cheshire UK

When I Was a Flower

I WAS once a flower—fair and large. My snowy chalice, filled with a perfume so rich as to intoxicate the rainbow-winged insects that perched upon it, recalled to those who beheld me the beauty of those myrrhine cups used at the banquets of the Caesars.

The bees sang to me all through the summer; the winds caressed me in the hours of sultriness; the Spirit of the Dew filled my white cup by night. Great plants, with leaves broader than the ears of elephants, overshadowed me as with a canopy of living emerald.

Far off I heard the river singing its mystic and everlasting hymn and the songs of a thousand birds. By night I peeped up through my satiny petals at the infinite procession of the stars; and by day I turned forever to the eye of the sun my heart of yellow gold.

Hummingbirds with jeweled breasts, flying from the Rising of the Sun, nestled near me and drank the perfumed dews left lingering in my chalice, and sang to me of the wonders of unknown lands—of black roses that grew only in the gardens of magicians and spectral lilies whose perfume is death which open their hearts only to tropical moons.

THEY SEVERED the emerald

thread of my life, and placed me in her hair. I did not feel the slow agony of death, like the fettered fire flies that glimmered as stars in the night-darkness of those splendid tresses. I felt the perfume of my life mingling in her blood and entering the secret chambers of her heart; and I mourned that I was but a flower.

THAT NIGHT we passed away together. I know not how she died. I had hoped to share her eternal sleep; but a weird wind entering through the casement rent my dead leaves asunder and scattered them in white ruin upon the pillow. Yet my ghost like a faint perfume still haunted the silent chamber and hovered about the flames of the waxen tapers.

OTHER FLOWERS, not of my race, are blooming above her place of rest. It is her blood that lives in the rosiness of those petals; her breath that lends perfume to their leaves; her life that vitalizes their veins of diaphanous green. But in the wizard hours of the night, the merciful Spirit of the Dew, who mourns the death of summer day, bears me aloft and permits me to mingle with the crystal tears which fall upon her grave.

—Lafcadio Hearn, 1880

Another Self-Service Shoe

YOU SEE a young man decorated with the copperpot hair and a blue neon mountain vest.

Your blood redistributes. "Excuse me," you say, "but your hair color distinguishes you

from anyone. And now that I see your mint tea eyes up close I know I have something for you. This figurine was carved in the south of Africa three generations ago. The neck is wrapped with silver. The shield is real hide. Come home with me." His fingers curl around the white metal. Capillaries burst in your cheeks.

Next Sunday his hairs carpet your bathtub. What a fine young man. Why is he going to Amsterdam without you? "I will," you say, "weave a house for you out of seaweed." And he says, "Yeah, I saw the kelp bales out back. Come outside." You stand barefoot on the snow sidewalk. He slaps you in the face: twice to make sure you heard, adding,

Nocturne

(In memory of Edgar Poe)

I OPENED the casement and looked into the night.

All was still.

Then slowly there grew upon my ears a confusion of faint moans. Every town, every hamlet, every cottage gave forth sounds. They were voices of children, of strong men and weak, of righteous and unrighteous; and all cried out in pain—cries of fear and agony and blasphemous despair. And the voices grew louder until I could understand not a few spoken words. They lamented dismally among themselves in many tongues:

"How I suffer! What have I done to deserve this? Not a day of health—not a ray of hope! Save me! Oh, the pain of it! I languish in chains!

"Get this straight. That isn't how the world works" and whistling he dances toward your house to finish his pancakes. On the flannel sky his hair stoplights nine buicks. Something shuts and traffic fills your ribs.

Behind you a red silk pirate walks his Doberman. "Pardon me," he says. His eyes iron your earlobes. Again he opens his mouth. A fork falls out. You run, you run sick. But you're not too sick for the smell of pancakes. Your hand is on the table, laid out beside the plate. The pirate is ringing the doorbell. In your chest nine drivers read paperbacks on slapping.

—Jay Rothbell Sheckley

Is this my reward? None so wretched as I! Ah, why was I born? I have prayed in vain! Doomed to long years of suffering—to a painful death! Spare me! Kill me! Be merciful and kill me! Kill!"

Said I to myself:

"This is the plaint of poor humanity, a plaint such as might melt the Fiend to compassion."

And the voices grew louder and more piteous, a wail of bitterness, a discord of hideous shrieks that rang into the stillness, ear-piercing, heart-rending.

And I marvelled, and said:

"How comes it that I have hitherto been deaf to these distressful tones?"

Now, as I continued to hearken, a change crept over the universal plaint. For the

howls and groans, the prayers and curses, ceased to sound in their separate manifestations, and the discords mingled like the strains of an Aeolian harp to form a symphony of tremendous chords, shrill and deep, that filled the air. As when the south wind, in furious gusts, breathes through the open reeds of some mighty organ till all is drowned in a seething ocean of melody: even so this torrent of suffering poured out upon the night; it swelled, sank low and swelled again, and never wholly ceased.

Passing wonderful! For lo!
It was the old familiar song

Another Way

I LAY in silence, dead. A woman came
And laid a rose upon my breast, and said,
"May God be merciful." She spoke my name,
And added, "It is strange to think him dead.

"He loved me well enough, but 'twas his way
To speak it lightly." Then, beneath her breath:
"Besides" — I knew what further she would say,
But then a footfall broke my dream of death.

Today the words are mine. I lay a rose
Upon her breast, and speak her name, and deem
It strange indeed that she is dead. God knows
I had more pleasure in the other dream.

— Ambrose Bierce, from *COLLECTED WORKS* edited by the author

Memory

THE GHOST called Memory walks the halls, wandering endlessly, searching in a kind of desperate terror for his resting place. He longs to be set free, but he is chained to me, an earthbound creature who cannot let go. I hang on, out of my own desperate terror.

that had sung in my ears since the days of my birth, and into whose origin it had never been given me to enquire. And now, as my ears grew conscious and once more accustomed to the throbbing harmonies, I found them, in truth, not altogether unpleasant.

Then I understood.

And I said:

"Doubtless there is some
Lover of Vocal Music overhead;
some Being who takes pleasure
in this chant and has contrived
it for his own delectation."

—Norman Douglas

(from *EXPERIMENTS*
McBride & Co., 1925)

Memory calls in whispers, shows himself in shifting patterns, clear for a moment, then trails away on wisps of smoke. The odor clings and tantalizes, reminds me of what was. What was? I get a glimpse of Memory, a pale image in a mirror. I step through

the glass and follow, but Memory stays just ahead, beckoning with a long smoke-trail of a hand.

Memory is a mystery. He dresses in a mask and robe — best not to have all revealed. His robe is dark like night and woven with silvery threads of dreams, the red threads of nightmares. The blood-red mask

does not hide the black hollows where his eyes used to be. Memory has no need of eyes. He has already seen it all; it is all him. The mask and robe cloak Memory, give him form so that I can dance with him, hold him in my arms, feel his embrace chilly and sweet.

—Margaret A. Colony, Arizona

There's No Such Thing As Monsters

"THERE'S NOTHING to be afraid of," he said. "There's no such thing as monsters."

Eddie looked up hesitantly. He obviously wasn't so sure. His father smiled; he remembered very well what it had been like at Eddie's age. "Tell you what, sport." He lifted the boy into the bed and slipped the heavy comforter with the Winnie-the-Pooh pattern up to his neck. "I'll make a magic pass over your room."

"Fairy magic, Dad?"

"Sure. Fairy magic."

He'd started reading the stories to his son early in the evening, and had gone on several hours. They weren't the stories his son requested — the easy-to-read books about small cars and trucks and puppies and kittens — but the old books with the fine bindings the father had saved from childhood. Inside these old books were the stories from another world — the ones about trolls and faery kings, adventuring sons and talking cats. And monsters of all kinds.

He stood over his son's bed and began to gesture slowly with narrow, long-fingered hands, hands good at everything from designing kites to fixing automobiles to making magic passes.

"Make it a good one. I hate bad dreams."

"I will, Eddie. I hate the bad dreams, too."

First the hands were fish, backs turning silver as they maneuvered through the dark air. Then they opened into pale yellow birds, winging their way over the bed posts. The boy's eyes filled with the wings, his mouth curling with pleasure. It made his father smile as he allowed his too-delicate hands to pass, to turn, and drift through the crowded corners and brightly-rugged open spaces of his son's room, the hands ancient toys and prehistoric beasts, the hands futuristic fighting machines and angels' feet walking the boy into his sleep. Finally the eyes shut down, and the magic hands pulled the covers a little closer around the sleeping form, and closed the door as the father left.

The old books with the even older stories lay sprawled across the living room cushions where they'd been left. He sat down among them and closed them carefully, as if for sleep. Then he stacked them precisely, all edges together.

He'd read them for himself, not for the boy. He'd read them because he'd wanted to

enter that world again. But his son also was attracted to that world, and turned the pages hungrily.

And had been frightened by the monsters they found. The shadows that moved with intention. And had to have a magic pass, a fairy pass, before falling down to sleep.

"There's no such thing as monsters," he said quietly to no one, and wondered why he'd done this to his son, taken the risk. "But some get lost, some get trapped there and cannot find their way back," he said to the night, and could not understand why he hadn't said this to his son, told him this part of the stories. "And some grow up there, all alone," the father said quietly to the dark.

He sat there for hours, hours past the time the outside world had gone quietly, and darker. Then as he did every night, he opened his son's door and slipped inside. To check

A Night

IT IS A night which is black as the hallowed mouths of jack-o'-lanterns not yet lit. It is a night when the wind, like a gang of children running through the streets, bumps and knocks debris about, hollers and chants tremolos through the hawthorns. It is this sort of crisp night when I came barefoot to your back step, shivering, my skirt raised in my hand. Walking carefully on a carpet of quiet, my fanciful feet lead me up your step where small creatures nibbling marigolds pause. I feel their breath on my ankles.

Your wooden screen door bangs

and to touch, to fix the entangled and discarded covers, to pray in his way.

The boy was well into sleep. He confirmed it with a pat and a stroke. With hands now downed in silver, fingers gone wiry, nails gone sharp. His teeth bit into his lower lip, and he gasped softly at the quick taste of blood. He forced the trembling hands to continue their tucking, his thoughts to continue their praying. And when the bloody flashes of insight came — the boy's neck breaking, the small face painted in reds and blues, the small limbs splintered under the force of old anger — he stopped, and let the beast's hands rise awkwardly to move in magical passes through the air.

"There's no such thing as monsters," he whispered, a magical chant to retrieve a boy lost too long in the woods.

—Steve Rasnic Tem, Colorado

to my gentle knocking. And I hear you move up from your chair and scrape your feet across the worn linoleum. Not seeing nor expecting me you come to the door your brows knit with sleep and annoyance.

You open the door with no voice for the words you think you should speak. This is all too sudden, too unexpected, too confusing; but I look steadily in your eyes — words are too much to risk. You stand back suggesting room for me to enter and I slip past your warm body like a sheet pulled in from the line. You are fastened to that spot and

the more you think the less able you are to speak. It is I who speak, after I pretend that I belong here. "Can't we talk?" I ask and smile at its double meaning. You arise from your terrible uncertainty with a polite response I do not hear. I like the silence and want it still between us.

You must know why I have come, but mistrustful you cannot act. I place my hand upon your shoulder and lay my head, fresh and cool with outside breezes, on your chest. But my freshness dissipates in the presence of stale terror — by the depth of it. It is this terror which I want to love me, to come up out of you and encircle me. I want to taste its bitterness and to

sting with its extremity.

This is a night of frayed certainty, a night of storm and upheaval. Our fears and hesitations pause our living. They are stacked in smothering lines; their static flow dare not be disturbed, yet it is a night to disturb them. It is a night of passing through all hatred and love, fear and trust, danger and safety. It is a night to punish and console. To take from each other honor and pride, to debase it, to destroy it. Bare and without shame, it is a night to embrace, falling through our eternal hell of limitations.

—Deborah Hansen-Zaiko,
Connecticut

The Fable of the Golden Plough

THERE WAS a Benevolent Fairy who was accustomed to doing Good Deeds in Whimsical Ways. One day she was flying across the country to attend a meeting of the A.O.B.F., when she noticed a Farmer laboring in the Fields. His horse was Attenuated and Decrepit, and his plough was Heavy and Old-Fashioned. Often he would pause and wipe the sweat from his brow. Plainly he was having a Hard Time.

The Benevolent Fairy watched him a moment and observed his Haggard Look and his general air of Misery. Suddenly an Idea came to her — to make the man Rich, so that he would no longer have to delve and struggle to eke out a Bare Living. So she swooped down and touched the plough with her wand — she was of course invisible — and instantly it changed to Solid Gold. Then, with an amused but

kindly backward glance, the Benevolent Fairy went on her way.

A year later, remembering the occurrence, she flew over to see how the Farmer was enjoying his Good Fortune. She found him in the Fields, ploughing laboriously and, if anything, he and his surroundings looked Meaner and More Miserable than they had before. Much surprised, the Fairy flew closer just in time to hear him murmur:

"I wish this ding-busted plough warn't so heavy!"

The Benevolent Fairy eyed him Pityingly — then she once more touched the plough with her wand, and it again became a thing of wood and iron. Then she flew away, and the Farmer resumed his Toil.

After all, are there not some folk who would die of thirst adrift on a river?

—Clifton B. Dowd, 1910

The Haunted Coat

ON THE afternoon of her graduation day Betty went up garret, because she felt uncertain and new, needing the grave companionship of things that had stepped aside with honorably rounded careers. The June sun was warm on the roof, bringing out the smell of old resin from the knots in the rafters. Cobwebs here and there catching the sunlight upon their dust, demonstrated something geometrically with golden lines and angles against dark corners. A mud-wasp grumbled up and down the dim window, and in the street a hand-organ droned a march.

Betty, as clean and new in her white gown and slippers as a butterfly still hanging on its cocoon with creases in its wings showing how it was packed, perched awkwardly upon her old high-chair, and wondered what she ought to be thinking about. Life was solemn. Everybody had said so that morning. Her own essay had been to that effect, with many quotations to prove the point. "Life is real, life is earnest." The world, in effect, needed a number of things done to it, and young people who were just commencing bore heavy responsibility.

The discarded furniture and rubbish seemed taking counsel together. "Is it so solemn?" The cradle asked that, and a cross of wax flowers under a glass shade answered:

"Why should it be so? One lives as long as one is pretty or useful, or thought to be so; then one comes up here. That is all."

"It is very quiet," said a broken toy drum, across whose head lay a dejected doll in hoop-skirts; but a haircloth sofa replied with dignity:

"Well, what then? Quiet is a good thing."

The opinion of an old leather trunk, hardly perceptible in a dark chimney-corner, seemed less simple of interpretation. Her mother had shown her what was in it, crying, and that grief had bewildered Betty to whom all time before she was born seemed remote. The desire of idle hands to pry and seek came upon her, the lid went back with a shrill cry, and the smell of faded disintegrating things came up. She lifted the yellow linen cloth and admired the martial glitter of the uniform beneath, patting the smooth black broadcloth, and running her fingers over the yellow buttons. How fine that young uncle of hers must have looked in it! The girls in the queer dresses of those days must have thought so. When he wore it he was only a few years older than Betty, and he had died before he knew anything about being old and bald, when he looked as he did in the picture downstairs, like the young men Betty knew, except for wearing odd-looking collars and those locks of hair in front of his ears.

She folded the coat over the trunk lid so that the rows of buttons presented a martial front. The long tails showed white silk lining; the epaulets must have been gorgeous when his trim young shoulders were

under them. This was the sort of coat one wore to balls; had he loved to dance then as much as Betty did now? Had he been very sorry to die? Once that coat had been an unimportant part of him — now it was all that remained, stitches, shoulder-padding, a little spot that might have been wine, the buttonholes showing how they had been buttoned and unbuttoned — but he was quite unreal, who had once been so real as Betty herself. Did one stop being real? Would Betty's graduating gown outlast Betty?

A YOUNG MAN stood by the trunk looking down upon its contents with a thoughtful air.

"You are a — dream, aren't you?" whispered Betty.

"That's all."

But his voice was wistful as if he wished he were more than that. Then he smiled dimly.

"How fine I used to feel in that! There's nothing like a little gold braid to set a fellow up." He touched the epaulets caressingly. "There was a ball — do they play the 'Blue Danube' now?"

"Not often, but we're going to have it tonight."

"Tonight? What's tonight?"

"My graduation reception. We have a little dance afterward, you know."

"Is that so? I'd have liked to go first-rate — thirty years ago — you'd have given me a dance, wouldn't you? Can I forget that night in June?" he hummed. "And it's as real to you as it used to be to me — I say —"

He was putting on the coat.

"The silk is falling to pieces, and the moths have been

at the sleeves." He sighed as he buttoned it over his chest. "It's odd how fond one is of the little things one leaves behind; they aren't of any real consequence, yet we keep buzzing about like bees over honey — and it's foolish to come back, yet we're always doing it. 'Can I forget that night in June?' — May I have the honor?"

He bowed before her with crooked elbow. Something happened to the garret; there were glimmering lights and shadows of another place, as when you take two photographs on the same plate, and these strengthened and brightened until there was a great room banked with flowers and palms; an orchestra at one end played the "Blue Danube," and there was such a crowd of people in gay queer clothes as Betty had never seen in all her days.

"May I have the honor?" said the trim young officer again, still bowing and offering his arm. His coat looked very new indeed. One could not imagine moth holes and tattered linings. She slipped her hand under his elbow and was whirled into the rustling crowd — all drifting together like autumn leaves while the band played the "Blue Danube."

"How do you like it?" whispered her uncle. "It's my first official ball. I couldn't come to yours, you see, so I've taken you to mine. It's old-fashioned, I know — but — once it was real."

"I'm just dreaming it?" said Betty doubtfully.

"Of course. What else could there be now? What are you looking so sad for? It's not gloomy. Why should things be

sad just because they're over?"

Yet the dream ladies, though they smiled and bowed and waved their fans as they circled softly about in their funny hoops, might have been saying to themselves or whispering to their partners, "How nice it would be if it were only real."

"You mustn't cry," said her uncle anxiously, "please don't! It will go — whisk — if you do, for it's only a dream — about — There she is! Look quick! That dark girl with red roses at her breast, and one in her hair. She had to come. It was her dream, too. She had promised me a dance, and I can't give it up, even for you, though you are real. Stay here, Betty, and keep the dream steady for us."

Betty stood by a pillar while he departed swiftly, and tried stoutly to hold the dream to its moorings, though sometimes it would waver, like a fog before a wind, showing a garret rafter through the chandelier, or an outcropping of the leather trunk where should be a red sofa with two pale ladies sitting on it.

Her uncle and the dark girl did not dance together long, but went out under an archway which looked cool and dim, and Betty was left alone, watching the people. At first she had to laugh a little at the hoops; presently her opinion changed, the hoops seemed the only proper dress in the world, and it was she who was absurd and out of date. One's hair, moreover, should be parted in the middle, brought down over the ears with a rigid smoothness, then curl accurately in the neck, and have a moss-rose or camelia tucked into it. Betty gathered her slim skirts even more tightly

about her and stood close to the pillar. How real they seemed! Would Betty's graduating reception ever be like this?

"Here she is," said her uncle. He was smiling. The dark girl was on his arm, and no longer wore a rose in her hair, for it had changed to the buttonhole of the young officer's coat, and smelled so sweet that Betty's face suddenly quivered and wrinkled.

"You mustn't cry," said her uncle anxiously.

"It's the music and the rose!" gasped Betty.

"If you cry, you'll spoil everything," pleaded the dark girl. "Oh, *please* don't cry!"

"There isn't anything to be sorry about, Betty. I thought it would give you pleasure."

"But — it's all over, and you died. You were happy about her and the rose, and all, but nothing ever came of it, and it's so long ago."

"We had this evening, didn't we? — besides —"

The girl caught Betty's uncle around the neck and pointed at Betty's face.

"It's rolling down her cheek — when it falls —"

The tear splashed from Betty's chin to the floor, the room wavered and broke into ripples like a lake with rain on it, and the brown rafters shut down. One glimpse of two reproachful young faces looking back at her, and then there was only the open leather trunk with the coat thrown across it, one empty moth-eaten sleeve dangling to the floor. The sleepy sunlight still lay on the cobwebs, and the wasp grumbled up and down the window.

One Man Went to Mow

"Oh, holy, awful Reaper
Have mercy in that day,
Thou puttest in thy sickle
And cast us not away..."
-Bourne

MR. BATCHEL sat in his study at the window overlooking the Vicarage lawn, his hands placed over his ears. It was a beautiful summer afternoon and the window would normally have been open. Rather than the restful sounds of the countryside however, there came — and only faintly muffled — the dire clatter of a mechanical lawn-mower. Mr. Batchel was undergoing an occasional and self-inflicted penance: a visit from his abrasive friend Mr. Wardle, who was wont to comment gratuitously on his antiquarian friend's domestic arrangements. In fact, during his previous visit he had been somewhat outspoken on the archaic methods prevailing in the gardening department.

Through previous decades, centuries even, and right up to this newly-entered twentieth century, the lawns of Stoneground Vicarage had been lovingly, if laboriously, tended by a succession of gardeners and their assistants plying scythes in graceful sweeping movements and keeping the ground and turf under strict control by much heavy rolling.

"What you need, Batchel," observed Mr. Wardle pointedly, "is waking up! Why, one of these new mowing machines will do the lawns in half the time, and only require one man too."

Mr. Batchel had quietly

dissented. Mechanical progress did not in his view necessarily bring the benefits, if benefits they truly were, claimed by its advocates. He was well aware that one of the companies profitting from Mr. Wardle's Direction manufactured such machines.

Nevertheless, when he went to meet Mr. Wardle at the station on the occasion of his current visit, Mr. Batchel was surprised to see his guest hail a porter and march back to the luggage van. A large and important crate was lowered gingerly to the platform and Wardle's strident voice could be heard giving instructions for delivery by horse dray to Stoneground Vicarage. During the cab ride home he parried Mr. Batchel's queries, though ready enough to comment briskly on any other subject the Vicar was incautious enough to mention.

At last the delivery came and Mr. Batchel strove manfully to be grateful for the present he was receiving — a Randall's Patent Mower — resplendent in the garish shades of red and green paint that are normally associated with Fairground equipment. There followed, of course, the obligatory demonstration and then the inevitable indignity of having to propel the machine himself at Wardle's behest. Certainly the grass was cropped with goat-like precision, the clippings were propelled in a neat canvas sack, and the rollers levelled the turf to a neat finish...but poor Mr. Batchel was conscious only of his red face, his

regrettable lapse into shirt sleeves and the unflattering comments on his lack of fitness that emanated from his friend. He only hoped that his houseboy was not a witness to the performance. Also the moving parts set up a fiendish clatter that made his head sing confusedly and scattered his thoughts just as effectively as they gathered up the clippings. He was very relieved to give way to Wardle, who proceeded to push the machine briskly up and down the lawn until tea-time.

IT WAS at this point that Mr. Batchel returned to his study. He was accustomed to spend some hours of each day working at his "History and Antiquities of the Minster Church" when not writing for antiquarian or ecclesiastical journals. Normally he spent the "wee sma' hours" at these labours of love, but since Mr. Wardle freely expressed concern for his sanity as a result of continuous midnight oil expended on "that rubbish," the Vicar felt obliged to devote more conventional hours to his scholarly pursuits when Wardle was visiting.

Thus we behold him, the all-pervading clatter of the machine dispelling and dispersing the flow of his thoughts from his writing. He hoped faintly that the advent of his gardener on the morrow might prove a stumbling block — either through condemning the machine outright (which Mr. Batchel's manners would not allow himself to do) or in effecting some subtle sabotage; but he was deluding himself. The gardener and Mr. Wardle were old cronies — green-fingered

brothers of the soil, neither reluctant to blacken hands or to break fingernails in the service of horticulture.

NEXT DAY the two men breakfasted amicably together as was their wont, Mr. Batchel enjoying Wardle's pungent comments on the business affairs in his newspaper. That gentleman lit a cigar and manoeuvred his host out to the stable yard, presenting his thoughts with a sweep of his hand.

"This yard looks like an Auctioneer's," he observed. "All this clutter! Now mind me, Batchel, you'll need a shed to keep that mowing machine out of the elements. Ah! That one there will do nicely. It's only full of useless clobber so far as I can see."

The "shed" in question was formerly a Tack Room of the stables and full of objects dear (or in some cases probably not so dear) to Mr. Batchel that had been "put away" pending further consideration. As a man who disliked sorting things out, he nevertheless knew that if left unchecked, Mr. Wardle would make short shrift of his treasures and pleasures. He therefore resorted to low cunning and said that he would indeed sort through the contents of the shed while Wardle initiated the gardener into the marvels of the mowing machine. He felt that that worthy's unhurried manner could be relied upon to extend the lesson.

In truth Mr. Batchel was not averse to rummaging through his accumulated junk. He had quite forgotten the existence of many items and was soon engrossed. Objects were coming to light that could not possibly be de-

stroyed . . . pieces of the sounding board that had once hung over the pulpit; a number of battered brass and pewter vases from neglected graves in the churchyard; the carved fascia panel from a linen chest; some damaged or incomplete gardening implements, including a scythe that might have been used by Father Time himself; a wheelbarrow full of flowerpots but lacking its wheel — which Mr. Batchel now recalled he should have collected, duly repaired, from the wheelwright last year, or perhaps the year before.

He did his best to be objective in creating two piles: things to be disposed of, and things under *no* account to be disposed of. But it was apparent even to his eye that the pile of things to be kept was infinitely larger than the other, and he felt sure that Mr. Wardle would not commend his efforts. As if to resolve this speculation, that gentleman appeared.

"How's it going, Batchel? Oh, good man . . . all this clutter to go, eh?" He pounced unerringly on Mr. Batchel's treasures; but was soon disabused of this notion.

"The trouble is that you *want* to live in a junk yard," he retorted, rooting about with fearful energy and contriving — do not ask how — to fix a makeshift wheel to the barrow. This he used to transport Mr. Batchel's paltry discards to the rear of the stables where he set-to building a bonfire.

MEANTIME THE gardener plodded slowly into view, gingerly pushing the new machine over the lawn and occasionally peering into the sack to savour the miracle of the collected

cuttings. He accepted the presence of "His Reverence" outside the shed beside a promising heap of junk as a diversion, and so was diverted.

"Why, that be my old Dad's scythe!" he commented. "I remember it well. Lookie to his mark on the handle." He swung it tentatively and a part of the handle disintegrated.

"Put it on the barrow," commanded Wardle, re-appearing and putting the order into effect himself, for the gardener was by then too engrossed in the stack to bother about the scythe. He was tugging free a dry and dusty leather jacket.

"That be my old Dad's, too! Wot I lost a two-year back."

Mr. Batchel could not account for its presence there other than by the supposition that the gardener had retired to the shed for a quiet siesta or a pipe of tobacco at some time in the past when he should have been toiling, then been disturbed in his reverie. The jacket was disreputable and *dermistid* grubs had attacked the leather with a will. His interest in how the Hide Beetles had got there was short-lived for Mr. Wardle grabbed it unceremoniously and added it to his barrow-load. Mr. Batchel reflected wryly that the "Old Chap" who sired the present gardener would not have stood for the incursion of "Randall's Patent" into the garden!

The gardener returned to his mowing, while Mr. Wardle wheeled his haul over to the bonfire and tipped it on. The old jerkin began to smoulder sullenly as it damped the flames, giving off clouds of pungent smoke.

Mr. Wardle went into the shed

to assess the space available, leaving the Vicar standing pensively beside the bonfire. The gardener tottered up with a full sack of grass cuttings.

"Whot'lloi-do with these?" he asked. Normally he made small ricks from the swept up scythings which tended to be long stems rather than clippings. His answer came in a most peculiar fashion.

The smoke from his Old Dad's jerkin had spiralled unnoticed by the men, creating a rather intense vortex. Conscious of a loud sucking noise from the fire, it reminded Mr. Batchel of a picture of Aladdin's Genie in a long-lost book from his childhood. The gardener on the other hand gave vent to a regrettable, "Lor'!"

The sucking sound grew louder and they became aware of the wind streaming past them and into the fire. A continuous flurry of grass cuttings was drawn, as if by magic, from the open sack that the gardener had dropped in alarm; and they funnelled upward into the smoke cloud. This had become the figure—or at least the upper half—of a man; thin and elastic in proportion, clothed entirely in green grass cuttings: a truly alarming spectacle, which now reminded Mr. Batchel more forcibly of Dore's "Grim Reaper" for it appeared to brandish a scythe. It lunged forward out of the fire and Mr. Batchel was bowled over, as by a mighty wind, to sit heavily and breathlessly in the dust of the yard.

Mr. Wardle emerged from the shed to observe a minor miracle. The gardener's arthritis normally formed a favorite topic of conversation or excuse with that

worthy, yet here he was fleeing wildly across the lawn! He was closely followed, at about shoulder height, by what seemed to be a large green kite which swooped and dipped in pursuit, as if riding against the wind. It had no strings though, and seemed to be decreasing in size every moment by fragmenting into shreds of what later examination showed to be scorched grass cuttings. As Wardle watched, the gardener gained the safety of the shrubbery and the "kite" finally disintegrated and vanished.

MR. WARDLE helped his clerical friend to his feet—he was still gasping and blessing his soul—and they saw that the bonfire had fallen in, the old jacket and scythe's handle consumed. As they poked the remains into a shower of sparks, the gardener was cautiously creeping out of the shrubbery, wiping his brow. That person said nothing (for a wonder) but received Mr. Batchel's handclasp—which clinked suggestively—with some alacrity, for the alehouse would be open; and the instruction not to return until the morrow with some pleasure.

"Well, what was all that about?" demanded the irascible Wardle.

Mr. Batchel thought he knew only too well what it was about, but had difficulty in putting it into words for his sceptical friend, who responded with somewhat less than his usual ascerbity.

"I've said it before, and I'll say it again. You need a holiday, Batchel! Get away from this place for a while. Being cooped up in this parish

year-in, year-out has affected your wits."

However, he did not suggest a resumption of the shed clearance and was quite noncommittal about further use of the mowing machine once it was installed there. Even when the gardener reported next day that the chain which linked the rollers to the driving blades had unaccountably become lost, he merely remarked that possibly it had parted during the mowing and fallen among the grasses; perhaps they might find it when next they scythed the lawn against the time of autumn growth.

FOR MR. Batchel's part he

The Ghost's Entry

THE CANDLE flutters and darkles;

There is no sound within;

The embers in ashes redden;

One flame crawls spectral and thin.

The candle flutters and darkles—

Wide and black is the door! I start—

The Wind was the ghost that entered,

And shook me and chilled my heart.

Executive Privilege

THE NEWLY elected President, enjoying the fruits of his landslide victory, moved about the room with practiced ease. A reception for the press posed no threat to a man of his confidence. As the A P Washington Bureau Chief approached him, it was with the utmost aplomb that he leaned his leonine head in the direction of this venerable representative of the 4th estate.

"Now that you've become the second professional actor to be elected our Chief Executive, Mr.

had almost forgotten the strange apparition to which he owed the ensuing peace and quiet, in his excitement at the discovery among the collected objects from the shed, a pair of large iron hooks attached to rusty chains and iron-clad timber handles. He surmised that they were for hitching to a horse team, and intended for the removal of burning thatch from rick or cottage roof. He knew of no better specimens, as he told the resigned Wardle, and was already planning the article he would write for the *County Gazette*.

—D. G. Rowlands,
Buckinghamshire UK

John James Piatt
1876

President, do you think this signals a trend?" the reporter asked.

The President smiled benignly and replied, "Of course not, my good fellow; I have the utmost confidence in the American people. They will always elect the best man for the job, unswayed by mere appearances. The Presidency is won by the man who best understands and addresses the issues. It is not won through the cult of personality."

The President paused, well

pleased with himself.

The reporter nodded respectfully and continued. "Then you feel, Mr. President, the fact that you played God in the movies had nothing to do with your being elected?"

The President stiffened. Visibly miffed, he replied, "Such impertinence! Of course not!"

"Then you're quite sure," the reporter went on, undaunted by the President's response, "that playing God in the past won't tempt you to do so again in the future?"

Teeny-Tiny

ONCE UPON a time a teeny-tiny woman lived in a teeny-tiny house in a teeny-tiny village. Now, one day this teeny-tiny woman put on her teeny-tiny bonnet, and went out of her teeny-tiny house to take a teeny-tiny walk. And when this teeny-tiny woman had gone a teeny-tiny way she came to a teeny-tiny gate; so the teeny-tiny woman opened the teeny-tiny gate, and went into a teeny-tiny churchyard. And when this teeny-tiny woman had got into the teeny-tiny churchyard, she saw a teeny-tiny bone on a teeny-tiny grave, and the teeny-tiny woman said to her teeny-tiny self, "This teeny-tiny bone will make me some teeny-tiny soup for my teeny-tiny supper." So the teeny-tiny woman put the teeny-tiny bone into her teeny-tiny pocket, and went home to her teeny-tiny house.

Now when the teeny-tiny woman got home to her teeny-tiny house she was teeny-tiny tired; so she went up her teeny-tiny

As the President turned bright crimson, the reporter, pleased with himself, stepped toward the refreshment table and picked up an apple.

"I've had quite enough of this!" the President stormed. "I do not have to stand such blasphemy!"

Looking about the room for his aides, he shouted, "Come, Michael, Gabriel! We have an appointment with the Joint Chiefs at the War College. There's work to be done!"

—Richard H. Fawcett
Connecticut

stairs to her teeny-tiny bed, and left the teeny-tiny bone in a teeny-tiny cupboard. And when this teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep a teeny-tiny time, she was awakened by a teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard, which said, "Give me my bone!"

And this teeny-tiny woman was a teeny-tiny frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head under the teeny-tiny clothes and went to sleep again. And when she had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice again cried out from the teeny-tiny cupboard a teeny-tiny louder: "GIVE ME MY BONE!"

This made the teeny-tiny woman a teeny-tiny more frightened, so she hid her teeny-tiny head further under the teeny-tiny clothes. And when the teeny-tiny woman had been to sleep again a teeny-tiny time, the teeny-tiny voice from the teeny-tiny cupboard said again a teeny-tiny louder, "GIVE ME MY BONE!" And the teeny-tiny woman put out her teeny-tiny head and in her loudest teeny-tiny voice said, "TAKE IT!" —Anon.

Chocolate

THERE IS a crack in her forehead. I pretend not to notice. For several weeks we take long walks ending in talks over cups of chocolate. I still make no mention of the crack, though it has split further.

At the height of autumn, when we are at our favorite spot and I am chatting away about the blazing trees and the grey sky, fluid begins to drip slowly through the crack in her forehead. I instinctively brush aside my own hair. She does the same. The clear liquid transfers to hand and she wipes it on the crimson napkin. I am still too shy to ask of her condition. And, too, she smiles and I know she is not in pain.

We make plans to meet the next day at a textile shop, for she very much loves fibers—and me. She says she wants to weave a wrap for me, the cold weather coming on and I a poor student in need of warmth. I am to choose the colors of the threads.

We meet the next day at the shop. I choose earth colors, autumn colors, browns and rust, and ochre.

We return to her apartment. She fixes cups of hot chocolate with an added touch of cinnamon.

We sit on the loveseat together. Though we do not face each other, I do notice the ever-widening crack. It now has a constant runnel of sticky liquid pulsing from it down both sides of her nose. I am finally about to question her condition when a faintness comes over me. She stands up and lets me stretch out on the loveseat. I

feel much relieved as the sensation passes. In the next moments I fall asleep, and it is at this time a dream takes place.

I am myself in the dream, but I am without arms and legs. And I am in a hospital bed, many stories up in a tiny shiny white-walled room. She is a nurse. We have wonderful conversations together over cups of chocolate which she feeds me in the afternoons. I always smile when she comes to visit.

One night she lifts me from the hospital bed and carries me so gently through the darkening evening to her apartment. She places me on her loveseat and goes to prepare chocolate. While she is gone I look around the warm, earthy room. The floor is covered with a carpet of dry autumn leaves. There are layers of webs of gossamer threads in the corners of the room. In the middle stands a loom.

She returns with one cup of chocolate which we share. She helps me sip. Afterwards she stands and places me gently on my side.

I look up at her face and notice the crack. As it splits and widens, the fluid pulses. She places her hands to the opening and carefully pulls an unending, sticky variegated thread. As the thread is drawn forth, she gently winds it about me, and with continuous motion she wraps me in a warm thick cocoon.

I awaken and I awaken.

My eyes are open, but all is dark. There is something atop me and tucked under my sides. I struggle a bit and move my

arms and legs. I pull the soft cover off my head and shoulders. I shut my eyes, for the light hurts them. I sit up. After a few moments I open my eyes. Across my lap is the most beautiful golden cloak with scattered threads of rust and browns. I hold it up to admire the unrepeating designs. I notice the long narrow slits at the back of the shoulder blades.

At that moment she enters

the room with a tray of drink and biscuits. She places it on the table by the side of the loveseat. As she does so, she asks me how I like her handiwork. I tell her I love it and am impressed. She smiles and sits next to me. While she hands me my cup I notice there is a glistening white scar in the middle of her forehead.

Over our cups of chocolate, we talk of an afternoon walk.

—Wendy Wees, *Seattle*

Life to the Dreamer

THESE OTHERS ask me little, clamoring
For such imperfect gifts as I can bring;
A crown—with thorns along it—or much gold
To weigh the heart down with its dragging hold,
Or men's loud voices crying on their name
A little day, then hurt and scorn—called Fame,
Or for one fleeting hour on earth made new
Called Love—but, Child, these gifts are not for you.

Too clear of sight, you ask things past my hold:
A light beyond sunlight . . . Fairy-gold . . .
Love ageless and unflawed . . . Faith crystal-true . . .
So, Child, I keep my broken gifts from you,
Leaving instead my only flawless thing,
The Dream the others lose, all-sorrowing,
Still raptured, still all-golden . . . Yours to keep
Till Death my sister's gift, more perfect Sleep.

—Margaret Widdemer, *Midland* volume 4, 1918

The Dream

MY FRIEND Diane, an Italian-American, told me her dream. She was back in Ithaca with her parents and decided to look up in the attic. She was startled to find several deceased relatives in perfect preservation, sitting around a table on which a large meal was also preserved. She walked around and around this attic museum, looking closely at

everything, shaking her head, wondering that she had never before known of this odd tradition. Then she noticed a Mounds chocolate bar near the hand of a motionless relative; and at this point she remarked aloud, "These Catholics! They'll save anything!"

—as told to

Jessica Amanda Salmonson

Phantom Forest Witch Song

GATHERED INTO greenish pools
Delight lies among the trees.
Here the warm blood quickly cools,
Here the swift limbs quickly freeze.

Pierce my veins, what do you find?
Nothing potent to congeal.
Thigh and breast and cheek are lined
With a substance brash as steel.

My green face and my great hair,
These my sharp, unwonted tears,
Take their color from the air
I have breathed a thousand years.

Do not tempt me to betray
One more victim. Birch and pine,
Cypress, dogwood, hemlock, bay—
These were lovers, once, of mine.

Gathered into greenish pools
Daylight lies among the trees.
When a lover's passion cools,
Harken! He becomes as these.

—Margaret Tod Ritter, from *WIND OUT OF BETELGEUSE*, 1928

The Thirteenth Cup

IT HAD BEEN his since infancy, a tiny, ancient drinking cup of beaten silver, given to him by his Godfather who had purchased it from an old Jewish antique dealer who claimed it had been the drinking cup of the first Napoleon.

The Fuehrer sneered as he remembered.

"Typical," he thought to himself as he handed it now to his bride of a few hours before. Holding the strychnine tablet in her hand, she stared at her husband in dumb fascination as the Fuehrer Bunker trembled steadily, a continuous barrage

of Russian artillery crashing overhead.

"Drink this, Liebchen," he said. "You drink from the very cup I held in my hand that night at the Buergerbräukeller in München. I have toasted all my victories with this cup. Now we toast the Gotterdammerung of the Third Reich with it, as we go to join the heroes of Valhalla. Prosit!"

Days later, an officer of the Red Army picking through the grey rubble that had been Berlin, unearthed a small, shiny object. With hardly a thought, other than that the

tiny silver cup could be worth
a few rubles when he returned
to Moscow, he picked it up and
placed it in his pocket.

The surviving chalice from

that dinner in the Garden of
Gethsemane so long ago, the
drinking cup of Judas Iscariot,
moved on.

—Richard H. Fawcett, Conn.

The Sea's Cold Blueness

THE SEA'S COLD blueness is by night
In so deep a chill encompassed
The shark fins seem to cut through the water
Into the heart of darkness
Like the scalpel of an unskilled surgeon
Blundering, blundering his way
Toward an aorta blood-sullied,
The sea's cold blueness
I affirm to be not without beauty
Its caverns an inscrutable mandarin's
Toyshop wonder of cordage, compasses,
The skulls of brave sailors,
Octopi with the eyes of demons,
And shadows of coral reefs enpurpled.
To travel far in the night sea
you have only to don
Your best skin outfit
And breast the tides with lungs inflated,
Eternity your goal.

—Frank Belknap Long, 1984

Morphine

GREAT IS THE similarity between
These two fair figures, although one appears
Much paler than the other, far more calm;
Fairer and nobler even, I might say,
Than his companion, in whose arms
I lay so warmly. How divine and soft
Were all his smiles, and what a look was his!
It must have been the poppy-wreath he wore
About his brows that touched my throbbing head
And with its magic perfume soothed all pain
And sorrow in my soul . . . But such sweet balm
Lasts but a little while; I can be cured
Completely only when the other one,
The grave and paler brother, drops his torch.
For Sleep is good, but Death is better still—
The best is never to be born at all.

—Heinrich Heine (tr. by Louis Untermeyer, 1917)



The Highwayman and the Wagoner

ONE DAY, towards nightfall, a highwayman was lying in wait for booty in a thicket, at a little distance from a road. And as a hungry bear looks out from its den, so did he gaze gloomily into the distance.

Presently he sees a lumbering wagon come rolling on like a wave.

"Ah!" whispers our Highwayman. "Laden, no doubt, with goods for the fair: nothing but cloth, and damask, and brocade, to a certainty. Don't stand gaping at it: there you'll get wherewithal to live. Ah! this day will not be lost for me!"

Meanwhile the wagon arrives. "Stop!" cries the robber, and flings himself upon the driver,

cudgel in hand. But, unluckily for him, it was no mere lubberly lad he had to do with. The Wagoner was a strapping youth, who confronted the malefactor with a big stick, and defended his goods like a mountain.

Our hero was obliged to fight hard for his prey. The battle was long and fierce. The robber lost a dozen teeth, and had an arm smashed and an eye knocked out. But, in spite of it all, he remained the victor.

The malefactor killed the Wagoner—killed him, and rushed upon the spoil. What did he get? A whole wagon-load of bladders!

—Ivan Krilof, *Russia*
tr. 1868

The Miser

A CERTAIN goblin used to keep watch over a rich treasure buried underground. Suddenly, he was ordered by the ruler of the demons to fly away for many years to the other side of the world. His service was of such a nature, that he was obliged to do as he was bid, whether he liked it or not. Our Goblin fell into a terrible perplexity, wondering how he should preserve his treasure in his absence—who there was to take charge of it. To build a treasure-house, and hire a guardian—that would cost much money. To leave it to itself—that way it might be lost; impossible to answer for it for a day. Someone might dig it up, and steal it; people are quick at scenting out money.

He worried himself; he pondered it; and at last an idea came into his head. The master of the house to which he was attached was a terrible Miser. The Goblin, having dug up the treasure, appeared before the Miser, and said,

"Dear master, they have ordered me to go away from your house to a distant land. But I have always been well disposed towards you, so don't refuse to accept this treasure of mine, as a parting token of affection. Eat, drink, and be merry, and spend it without fear; only, when you die, I am to be your sole heir. That is my single stipulation. As for the rest, may destiny grant you health and long life."

He spoke, and was off.

Ten—twenty years went by.
Having completed his service,
the Goblin flies home to his
native land. What does he see?
O rapturous sight! The Miser,
dead from starvation, lies
stretched on the strong box, its
key in his hand; and the ducats
are all there intact. So the
Goblin gets his treasure back a-

gain, and rejoices to think that
it has had a guardian who did
not cost him a single farthing.

WHEN A miser has money,
and yet grudges to pay for food
and drink, is he not treasuring
up his ducats for a goblin?

—Ivan Krilof, *Russia*
tr. 1868

The Dark Cavalier

"Death comes to set thee free,
O greet him cheerily
As a true friend. . . " —*Sintram*.

I AM THE Dark Cavalier; I am the Last Lover.
My arms shall welcome you when other arms are tired:
I stand to wait for you, patient in the darkness,
Offering forgetfulness of all that you desired.

I ask no merriment, no pretense of gladness,
I can love heavy lids, and lips without their rose:
Though you are sorrowful you will not weary me—
I will not go from you though all the tired world goes.

I am the Dark Cavalier; I am the Last Lover.
I promise faithfulness no other lips may keep;
Safe in my bridal place, comforted by darkness,
You shall lie happily, smiling in your sleep.

—Margaret Widdemer, 1918

An April Ghost

ALL THE GHOSTS I ever knew,
White, and thinly calling,
Come into the house with you
When the dew is falling.

All of youth that ever died,
In the Springtime weather,
In the windy April tide,
Climb the dusk together.

For a moment, lad and maid
Stand up there all lonely;
In a moment fade and fade—
You are left, you only.

—Lizette Woodworth Reese,
from *SELECTED POEMS*, 1926



To Lord Dunsany

(Upon his return from the war.)

WE GREET you poet, subtle craftsman, one
Who, having heard the harmonies of prose,
Their mighty music through his pages blows
As wind drives clouds athwart the springtide sun.
The pageant of mankind is never done:
Across your stage the strange procession goes,
Beggar and king; each by his action shows
Life understood to be a dream begun.

Yet, first of all, we hail you at this time
The soldier, one who waited not to see
Ireland's advantage till the world was free.
Adding new lustre to your prose and rhyme,
What nobler title can your fame enhance
Than Irish soldier from the field of France?

—Norreys Jephson O'Connor (from *THE BELLMAN*, May 10, 1919)

An Evocation of Harakiri

DINNER OVER, I go to see a
collection of swords. My
friend's husband, a lawyer,
squats on his chair, displaying
his shins.

He takes the swords, one by
one, raises them to his fore-
head with a venerable gesture,
makes rhythmic cuts in the air
with them. He has the harsh
accent of his native province,
and guttural exclamations fall

from his lips. His eyes—like my
father's—peer upward from thick
brows, and sparkle as his glance
runs voluptuously along the keen
edge of the swords.

The leather armchairs and the
European furniture seem to fade
into the background. Here is a
man of the old stock, paying
homage to his swords.

—Kikou Yamata, France, 1927
tr. J. J. F. Mills Whittem

Waiting

THEY SWEAR the dead come back at night,
Who once were women and men,
And sob and cry in the strange weather,
To be let in again.

Out by the straggling thorn I wait,
But you are not come yet;
So it must be that I remember,
And that you forget.

—Lizette Woodward
Reese, c1926

And the Contributors Are...

Poet, novelist, short story writer MARGARET WIDDEMER shared the 1918 Pulitzer Prize with Carl Sandburg. /Unknown author MARY ARINGTON appears also in F&T#s1&2. /Encountering the work of ALPHONSE DAUDET for the first time, George Sand said, "He has talent and heart," to which Flaubert replied, "If you knew the author, you would like him even better than his book." /MARY ANN ALLEN has appeared in F&T#2, Ghosts & Scholars, and Tales By Moonlight. /Traveller JAY ROTHBELL SHECKLEY is presently living in Spain. /MARGARET A. COLONY and DEBORAH HANSEN-ZAIKO each appear here for the first time. /NORMAN DOUGLAS was a popular novelist. /AMBROSE BIERCE was a curmudgeon. /LAFCADIO HEARN had a face like a goblin. /STEVE RASNIC TEM contributes to innumerable magazines and anthologies. /CLIFTON B. DOWD's fable is from an old issue of Lippincott's Magazine. /A popular ghost story writer of the 'teens and 'twenties, GEORGIA WOOD PANGBORN is here revived for the first time in more than fifty years. Her son also wrote. /JOHN JAMES PIATT was an Indiana journalist and poet with many collections of verse, including The Ghost's Entry and Other Poems (1895). /DAVID ROWLANDS has a short story collection from Haunted Library, Eye Hath Not Seen... The present tale uses characters first devised by E. G. Swain in The Stoneground Ghost Tales. /WENDY WEES, a well known illustrator, appears here with her first published prose. /HEINRICH HEINE was an enormously influential romanticist from a Jewish ghetto in Germany. /FRANK BELKNAP LONG is legend to the horror field and his new poem was most gratefully received. /Although little of MARGARET TOD RITTER's verse appeared in the most prestigious magazines of her day, she was nevertheless one of the finest American lyricists of the 'twenties and was known to readers of Bookman, Century, and Commonweal. She heralds from the same school as Elinor Wylie, Sara Teasdale, and LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE, all of whom delighted in ghostly themes. /ARCHIE N. ROY is a horror fan and writer in Scotland. /The 1919 poem by NORREYS JEPHSON O'CONOR to Lord Dunsany is of special interest when one considers the radical stylistic changes in Lord Dunsany's fiction—his lessened sense of humor—after his return from France. /KIKOU YAMATA wrote for Parisians in the 1920s; she was of samurai lineage. /Russia's best known fabulist was IVAN KRILOF, who wrote in a time of heavy censorship when fables served as editorials on daily life and political events.

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jolly boy

I went out with my dog
one day —
Intending what to do?
Why, chop his head, throw
it away,
And cook the rest as stew!

A faithful pet he's
always been
And saved me once or twice
From ruffians, such
violent men;
Is axing him not nice?

I never liked him, I've
confessed
This jolly, friendly boy;
But once he's ready to
digest
That's something to enjoy!

—Jessica Amanda Salmonson

ADALBERT
HÖLZER